The Formation of the Galveston Bay Ecosystem, the Indigenous People, and the European Intruders Pre-history to 1800

Pre-history

While archaeologists cannot pinpoint the year when humans first visited the Galveston Bay area, it may have been about 12,000 B. C.-or as many researchers prefer, 14,000 years B.P., "before the present." These Paleo-Indians were big-game hunters-woolly mammoths, mastodon, and large bison and other ancient animals (Few, 1991:16, 18). It was a colder and wetter climate, and Galveston Bay had not yet taken its present shape. The shore line was perhaps fifty to one hundred miles farther out in the Gulf on what is now called the continental shelf. Experts disagree as to when the shore line receded and the bay took its present shape but it was sometime between 4,500 to 5,000 B.P. (Few, 1991:10, 23; Pearson, 1992).

Geologists and archaeologists can tell where the original river valleys, deltas, beaches, and lagoons were by taking core samples through the various layers of soil on shore and more recently on the continental shelf. Geologist Rufus J. LeBlanc explains that 30,000 or more years ago the sea levels dropped during the Ice Age and streams became more deeply entrenched across what is now the continental shelf. When the glaciers began to melt, the sea levels rose, gradually drowning the old entrenched river valleys and created estuaries and bays such as the San Jacinto, Trinity, and Galveston bays. While rivers like the Brazos, Rio Grande, or the Mississippi have filled their estuaries with silt and often have delta-like entrances, the Trinity and the San Jacinto rivers are still silting their estuaries (Few, 1991:1, 4), although at a slower rate because of dams now on these rivers. Thus the Galveston Bay area is a still-changing ecosystem even without man-made alterations that sometimes hasten the process.

Beginning in the 1970s archaeologists began speculating that the continental shelf would have intact archaeological evidence of aboriginal occupation. Having explored onshore middens (trash piles of ancient campsites), they projected what might be found offshore. Under the auspices of the Minerals Management Service of the U. S. Department of Interior, the archaeologists tested the theory off the Texas coast between High Island and the Sabine River. Seismic data and vibracore samples (continuous cores up to 40 feet long) yielded geological information about the layered formations. As expected, the clay strata were interspersed with evidence of fresh and brackish water organic deposits indicating pre-inundation conditions. At certain levels grass and pollen samples appeared along with charred wood, nut hulls, seeds, fish scales, and bone, some of which was carbonized. Radiocarbon testing suggests that these organic deposits date around 8,000

B.P. While none of the evidence proves human occupation, the findings are similar to many onshore middens and seem to provide evidence of people living on the continental shelf (Pearson, 1988:26-30).

During the Paleo Indian period, between 9,000 and 14,000 B. P., the nomads followed the herds of animals. Each band had perhaps thirty members, but the small groups joined together to hunt the larger game. Such a foray required planning and cooperation of many individuals because the attack was by close-quarter stabbing or throwing. The hunters used spears, lances, and darts tipped with well-made fluted points (concave in the lower portion and base) called "Clovis" and "Folsom" points depending on their style. These points were flint or obsidian—evidence of an extensive trading network because such stones do not exist around Galveston Bay. These ancient people not only ate the meat from their kill but also used the skins, bones, tusks, and horns for clothing, storage bags, shelter, tools, and weapons (Few, 1991:18-19).

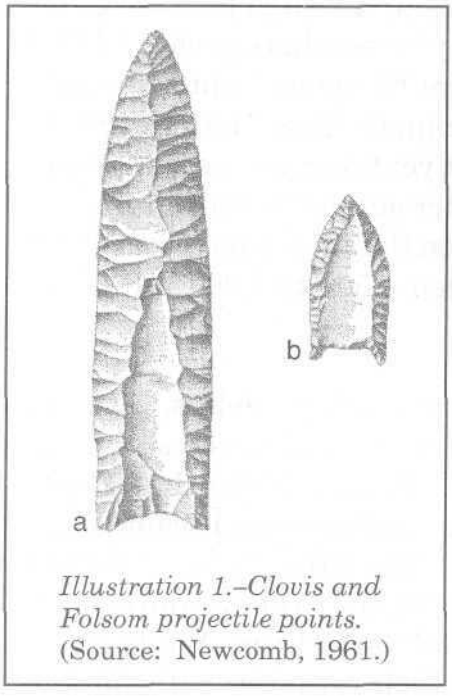

Illustration 1.–Clovis and Folsom projectile points. (Source: Newcomb, 1961.)

During the late Pleistocene period just before 8,000 B.P., those shadowy Paleo-Indians roamed around the waters that became Galveston Bay hunting the large animals that grazed the extensive grassland. Archaeological remains found on the Texas City Dike indicate not only mammoth, mastodon, and *Bison antiquus* foraged in the vicinity, but also prehistoric camels, horses, armadillos, tigers, and sloths frequented the area. The dike, a man-made barrier to protect the harbor, was dredged in the 1930s from Galveston Bay and evidently in the valley of one of those ancient rivers. The dike has also yielded bones of animals more familiar today such as wolf, bear, rabbit and so forth. Among the fossils were marine creatures such as turtles and manatees. Some of these bones seem to show butcher marks while others appear to have been altered for use as tools (Texas City Dike Fossil Collection 1991; Few, 1991:19).

About 8,000 years ago the Archaic Period began, a time period lasting for about six thousand years. This was when the big animals began disappearing and point technology changed from the large lance-type to smaller spear and dart points that usually had stems and bases for ease in attaching to the shaft. Sometimes the edges of these more refined points had beveled edges. While Paleo-Indians may have used the atlatl (spear-thrower), it became common during this period, allowing hunters greater accuracy and distance. The nomadic hunters and gatherers continued to follow game and collect the seasonal fruits, berries, and nuts. They traveled in bands, often family groups, and continued to visit the Galveston Bay area (Few, 1991:20-21).

Galveston Bay hunters and gatherers continued to improve their life style. By 100 A.D., or 1,900 years B.P., area visitors began making pottery from local clay which provided more convenient ways to store and cook food. Some pottery makers decorated the rims with geometric designs before firing and some archaeologists informally call this period, 100 A.D. to 1528 when the first Europeans arrived, the "ceramic period." Most refer to it as the late Prehistoric. These seasonal residents continued a nomadic lifestyle and seem not to have discovered the advantages of planting and harvesting crops as did certain contemporary groups in the Mississippi River valley and the Southwest. About 1,400 years B.P., weapon technology changed again when hunters began using bows and arrows. Archaeologists also find stone, bone, and shell tools such as drills, scrapers, knives, and other conveniences at numerous sites around the bay and its waterways. Sea shells were also used for personal decoration and when traders visited inland sites, shells were a valuable commodity to exchange for woodland products. Bone sometimes was shaped into gaming pieces and flutes suggesting both recreational and perhaps ritual use (Few, 1991:20-22).

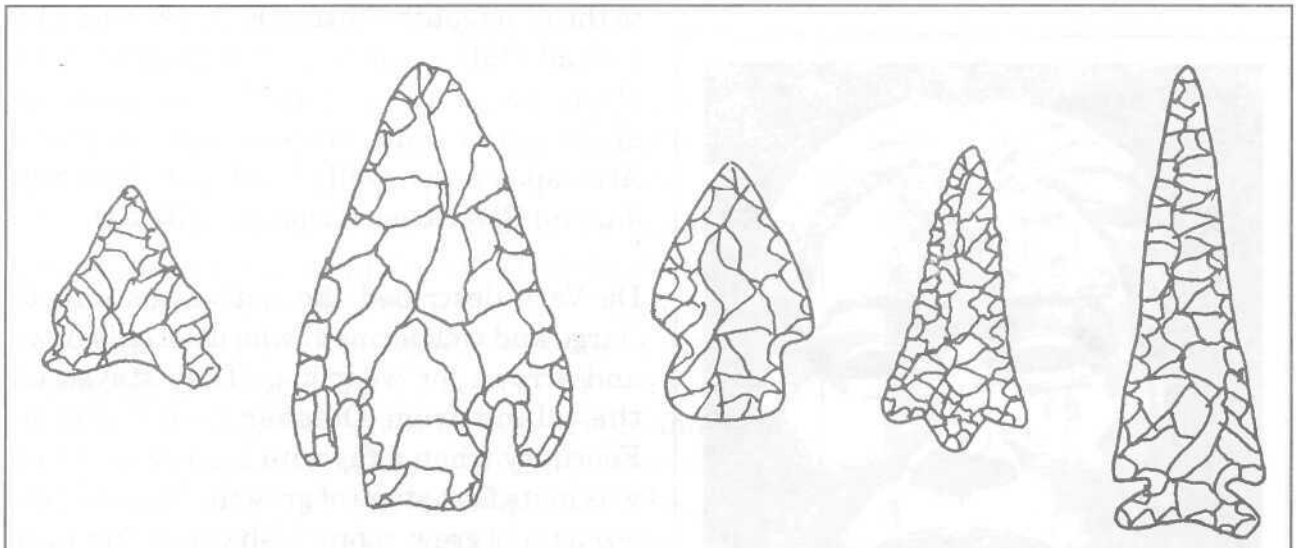

Illustration 2. Points from San Jacinto Bay sites. (Source: Patterson and Marshall, 1989.)

In sum, the earliest people used the bay area as a hunting ground for the necessities of life. Land, air, and marine life provided food and the residue was used for making shelter, clothing, tools, and decorations. The shore itself and its plants also contributed towards the comfort of these early residents. Their trash piles—mostly oyster shells during the Paleo-Indian era and after 4,000 B.P., rangia clam shells—dotted the shores of the waterways indicating some thought about the disposal of garbage (Pearson, 1992).

The First Europeans: Spaniards, 1528

With the coming of the Spanish in 1528, the first written record about Texas coastal Indians appeared. A group of Spaniards had landed near Tampa Bay on Florida's west coast in April, 1528 and unwisely decided to explore northward where hostile natives and hunger devastated the party. In order to survive, the men built five crude sail boats and with scanty provisions left the Pensacola area for Mexico which they thought was nearby. A storm cast them ashore on the Texas coast near Galveston Island in November where the natives fed them but made them slaves. Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca was one of only four survivors who reached a Mexican outpost in 1536. He published his account in Spain in 1542 detailing the ill-fated venture and also described the appearance and culture of the natives he had encountered.

Two similar bands frequented the island of Malhado [Bad Luck], De Vaca's name for the island where they landed, possibly Galveston Island, but spoke separate languages: Capoque and Han. Researchers speculate that the Capoques were ancestors of the nineteenth century Cocos who lived southwest of the Brazos River and who were related to the nineteenth century Karankawas who visited Galveston Island annually. The Hans seem to be the forerunners of eighteenth and nineteenth century Attacapas who usually lived east of the San Jacinto River basin (Hodge, 1907:54).

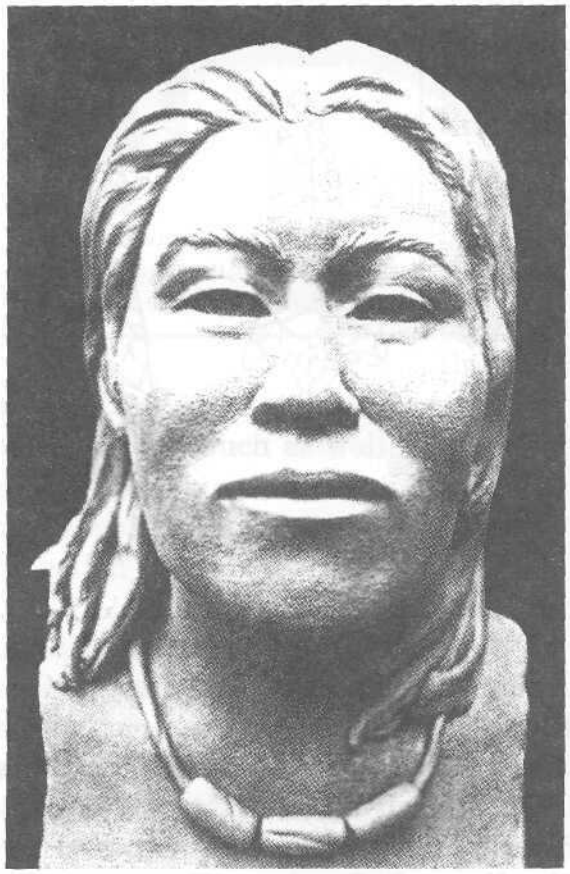

Illustration 3a.-Sculpted Head of Galveston Island Aboriginal from Jamaica Beach Skull clSOO. (Source: Few et al, 1990.)

De Vaca described the natives as naked, "large and well formed" who used only bows and arrows for weapons. They stayed on the island from October to the end of February when a favorite underwater root was in its first stage of growth. The walnut-sized roots grew in brackish water and were very difficult to dig, the task being assigned to women and slaves like De Vaca. When the roots began to grow, they were unpalatable and the nomads left the island (Hodge, 1907:50). With the roots, the natives served the Spaniards large quantities of fish, perhaps caught in woven cane weirs or shot by arrows. They did not have hooks (Hodge, 1907:45). When the band was ready to leave the island, the women loaded their belongings into canoes and paddled to the mainland. They camped

on a bay for three months eating oysters until about May when they went to the coast for blackberries (Hodge, 1907:52). The nomads seem to have understood the rhythm of seasonal harvests.

One can speculate that they ate other things that were forgotten by the surviving Spaniards. At this time shell fish, alligator, and turtle were often taboo food for Christians so perhaps De Vaca failed to mention such fare on Malhado. Two other Spaniards, slaves of another band, complained that they had to survive on crabs and rockweed, which a translator interpreted to be kelp (Hodge, 1907:61). At first the starving Spaniards occasionally resorted to pragmatic cannibalism by eating their dead, a not uncommon European practice among castaways, but the coastal natives did not eat human flesh in 1528 and seemed outraged by the practice (Hodge, 1907:63).

After a year as a slave on the island, De Vaca became a trusted trader and faith-healer and was allowed to travel to the mainland to trade with the Charruco. They lived in the forest which could have been along any of the streams emptying into Galveston or West bays or even the Brazos River. De Vaca traded seashells used to make tools, sea-beans used as medicine, and other marine objects for skins, ocher, hard canes for arrows, sinew for bowstrings and other binding, some sort of adhesive to attach arrowheads to the canes, and flint for the weapons (Hodge, 1907: 56). When visiting the inland bands, De Vaca noted many birds and animals including bison which he called cattle, not having seen any before. Bison flesh was fine, he said, and the hides very useful (Hodge, 1907:68).

Finally in 1534, the handful of remaining Spaniards plotted an escape during the annual gathering of all the bands at the pecan groves in the river bottoms. The natives ground the pecans into a meal-like consistency seemingly to be stored (Hodge, 1907:57-60). Some groups also traveled to areas rich in prickly pears to eat the purple tunas (fruit) that

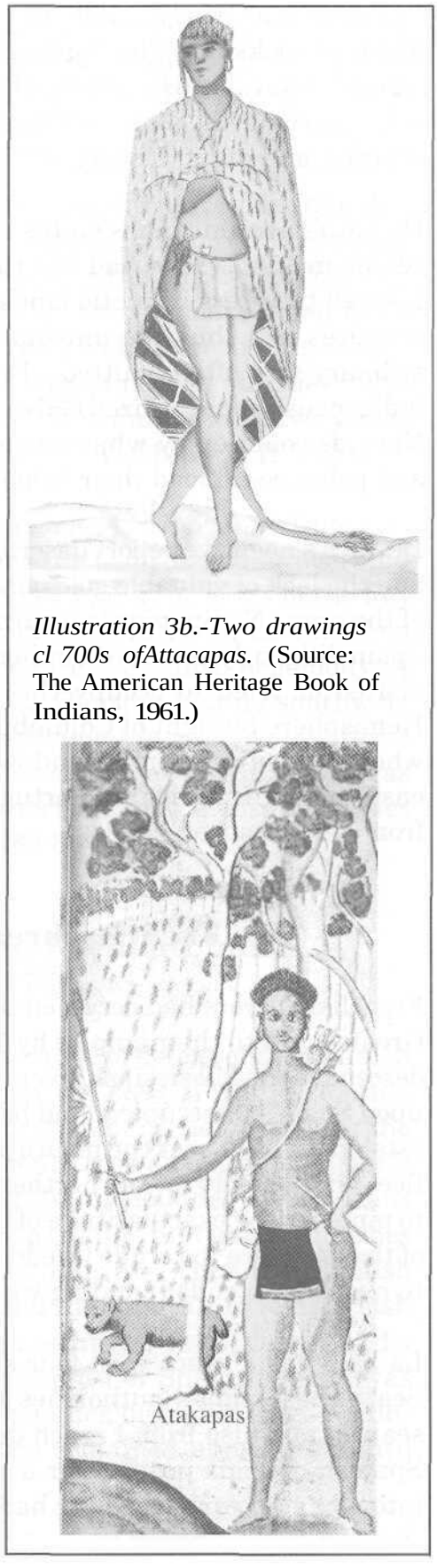

Illustration 3b.-Two drawings cl 700s ofAttacapas. (Source: The American Heritage Book of Indians, 1961.)

line each pad (Hodge, 1907:61). There is no mention of using the flat green pads as Mexican cooks do. The natives had dogs but De Vaca said nothing about eating them (Hodge, 1907:44, 64). Some of the Spaniards were with groups that killed deer, but when starving, the disgusted Spaniards remembered that the natives ate ant eggs, insects, reptiles, and dung (Hodge, 1907:65).

De Vaca's account relies on his and the other three survivors' reminiscences after their rescue in 1536. They had lost their possessions and had no means of keeping journals. Like all travelers in exotic lands, they were amazed and shocked by some of the native practices and thus the unusual and outrageous was recalled and recorded while the ordinary was often omitted. But from this first European record, it is clear that the indigenous people utilized Galveston Bay in a sensible manner according to their culture. Nomads could enjoy whatever food was available, and with shelters made of matting and poles, could load their belongings into canoes for easy transport to a new site.

De Vaca's negative report describing the low level of culture among Texas coastal people and the lack of valuable gold, silver, or precious stones resulted in discounting the value of the area. No Spaniards returned to Galveston Bay until the last half of the 1700s but Spain diligently searched out intrusions by other Europeans, especially the French, who visited or tried to occupy the Texas Coast. Spain, of course, claimed the Western Hemisphere by right of Columbus' voyages, a pretension confirmed by the Pope in 1494 who awarded unclaimed land west of eastern Brazil to Spain and all new lands to the east (including Africa) to Portugal. Spain, however, could not defend all of her empire from her European rivals.

The French Threat and Spanish Response 1685-1690

French explorers had occupied the St. Lawrence River in the early 1600s and added the Great Lakes to their empire by 1682 when Rene Robert Cavelier, the Sieur de la Salle, descended the Mississippi River. He claimed its entire basin for France, thereby intruding upon Spain's unoccupied land bordering the northern Gulf of Mexico. France wanted to establish a base near the mouth of the Mississippi to prey on the annual Spanish treasure fleet and possibly invade northern Mexico to capture the mines. But LaSalle was unable to pinpoint the exact latitude of the entrance to the Mississippi because the instruments of the day were too crude (Weddle, 1973:1-3, 16-23). This lack of technology caused him to miss his intended landing when he returned by sea in 1685.

La Salle left France with four ships but Spanish corsairs seized one in the Caribbean Sea. The Spanish authorities learned about the intended French colony from these seamen and also from French deserters after La Salle reached Santo Domingo (Haiti). Spanish officials puzzled for a year over where "Micippi" was and decided it emptied into a bay an early explorer had called "Espiritu Santo" somewhere between Apalache

[Tallahassee] and Tampico. A vessel was sent from Havana to explore the Florida coast in January 1687 but it passed the mouth of the Mississippi River without notice. The Spanish found no Frenchmen and sailed to Veracruz in March (Weddle, 1973:24-25, 29, 47-52).

Meanwhile, La Salle had sailed past the Mississippi and landed in Matagorda Bay assuming that the big river emptied into the bay. After building a fort on Garcitas Creek near the mouth of the LaVaca River on the northwest corner of the bay, he explored by land as far as the Rio Grande. In January 1687, about the time the Spanish had launched their coastal search, La Salle and a small party set off north east looking for the Mississippi River. He hoped to find a French outpost because his colonists needed supplies. The French leader was killed by his own men near the Navasota River and within two years, Indians attacked the tiny fort and massacred all of the adults (Webb, 1952:11:31-33).

Determined to find the intruders, the Spanish also launched a search by land from just below the Rio Grande. Between 1686 and 1690 Capt. Alonzo de Leon made five overland trips looking for the French. On his last expedition, De Leon found the ruins of the fort and burned what little remained. Acting on orders from his superiors, he marched northeast over Indian trails to establish a mission as evidence of Spanish hegemony. A wooden compound, San Francisco de los Tejas, was built in Houston County southwest of present-day Nacogdoches and was the only Spanish settlement in what is now Texas except for the El Paso area. The tiny isolated mission was abandoned in 1693 but was re-established in 1716 when a second French intrusion, this time from the Natchitoches area, again stimulated Spanish reaction (Webb, 1952:1:483-84).

Spanish Neglect of the Gulf Coast and French Claims to Galveston Bay 1720-1756

By 1690 Spain was a declining European power in part because of defeat of the Spanish Armada by the English in 1588. Its treasure ships from the New World were often seized by enemies and it had little money for costly exploration or settlement along the northern Gulf coast, an area considered worthless. The French took advantage of Spain's neglect and occupied Mobile and Biloxi between 1699 and 1702 and founded New Orleans in 1718. In 1714, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis established *a* trading post at Natchitoches on the Red River to exploit trade with Indians in Spanish Texas. Thus the Spanish soldiers and missionaries once again traveled the old inland Indian trails to re-establish hegemony by building a mission and presidio in 1716 at present-day Nacogdoches and a similar way-station at the Alamo in 1718. In 1721 the capital of Spanish Texas was placed east of the Sabine River at Los Adaes, a presidio complex built just fifteen miles west of French Natchitoches. Even so, the lower Trinity remained unexplored until 1745 and Galveston Bay uncharted until 1785.

By 1714, the governor of French Louisiana began looking for the site of La Salle's fort, which was presumed to be on a bay called by the Spanish "San Bernard." The French, of course, considered it theirs by La Salle's occupation (Cadillac, 1714). Maps of the period were poor, and Galveston Bay looked like it might be the obscure Bahia de San Bernardo.

The first French ship to stop in Galveston Bay did so by accident. The *Marechal d'Estree* sailed from France in August 1719 and reached the Louisiana coast by October with soldiers assigned to the area. The inept captain sailed past the entrances to the Mississippi River and reached Galveston Bay. Needing fresh water, the vessel anchored offshore and sent a boat to sound for a channel. Finding only seven or eight feet of water, the captain sent in small boats with casks to be filled, but the water proved brackish. Leaving the bay and continuing west, the navigator finally convinced the captain that he was heading for Veracruz and trouble. Returning eastward, the captain decided to enter the unnamed bay and the vessel immediately ran aground. The ship was saved by having the crew run back and forth across the deck while hoisting all sails to catch the offshore wind (Folmer, 1940:205-09).

Not knowing where they were and desperate for supplies, five military officers, including twenty-four-year-old Simars de Bellisle, volunteered to go ashore thinking that they would reach a French settlement in a few days and send a relief ship. The next day the five discovered that their ship had abandoned them. For several weeks they roamed the area living off the land by shooting deer and birds and gathering oysters until they ran out of ammunition. All died except Bellisle. He survived by eating anything, including grass and worms from rotting trees (Folmer, 1940:209-215).

Finally he saw three natives searching for bird eggs on an island in the bay and he rowed out to meet them in the small boat he had found washed up on the shore. They took his possessions but in return gave him eggs and fish that they had caught. They took him to their camp on the mainland [below Anahuac] where their families were and fed him boiled "potatoes," perhaps the same roots mentioned by De Vaca. He spent the entire summer [1720] with this band of Indians that he called the Caux. They had no "cabins or fields" and continually searched for food. The men killed deer and buffalo and the women harvested the roots (Folmer, 1940:215-216). Professor Herbert E. Bolton identified these Indians as 18th century Attacapas, a family that not only included the Louisiana Attacapas but the Texas Bidai, Orcoquiza, and Deadose (Bolton, 1915:3, 36).

At the end of summer, the Indians packed their belongings into "pirogues" and headed to "the end of the bay," a trip of a week, where they joined others. Bellisle was a slave and gathered wood, carried water, and dug potatoes. Learning that there was a white man [St. Denis at Natchitoches] with whom they occasionally traded, Bellisle wrote a letter on a scrap of paper and begged them to give it to the Frenchman. In the interim, Bellisle accompanied the hunters to the prairies to kill buffalo and also engage in warfare. The natives mounted their horses [this is the first mention of horses in the Galveston

Bay area] while Bellisle had to trot along behind carrying some of the baggage. They came upon a herd of 80-100 bison and killed 15-16 animals by shooting arrows from horseback. A war party returned with a dead enemy whom they butchered and ceremonially ate portions of the body. When they returned to their camp, two Indian emissaries from St. Denis arrived to escort Bellisle to Natchitoches where he arrived February 10, 1721 and reached the French governor in Biloxi soon afterward (Folmer, 1940:219-225).

While Bellisle was still a prisoner in 1720, Capt. Jean Beranger was sent from Biloxi in August to occupy "St. Bernard Bay." He was unable to enter Galveston Bay because of high water and adverse winds but found another bay [Matagorda] to the southwest and sailed in. He planted a French plaque and left five men on the shore before returning to Biloxi (Folmer, 1940:226-227).

Meanwhile, Jean Baptiste Benard de la Harpe was named commander of St. Bernard Bay in November, 1720, in Paris and reached Biloxi in the spring. He sailed for Galveston Bay in August 1721 on board the *Subtile* with Beranger as ship captain and Bellisle as interpreter. Bellisle met the same Indians on the shore who had enslaved him two years earlier. La Harpe wanted to establish a trading post in the vicinity, but the Indians were adamantly against it (Folmer, 1940:227-230).

La Harpe and Bellisle explored the bay in a canoe along with a surveyor and ten soldiers. Some of the Indians followed them in pirogues while others skirted the shore on horseback. The Frenchmen entered the Trinity River and noted the fine prairie and forests on the high banks. The natives entertained the French in their camp offering grain, roots, and smoked meat. La Harpe described the 150 villagers as "well-formed" with "regular features." Six pirogues with ten men each visited the *Subtile* where the French demonstrated the cannon and other firearms. After giving them a dog and some chickens (and instructions for their care), the French put them ashore except for nine men. They took one elderly chief and eight young men to Biloxi in October in order to convince them of French power. In some manner, the nine escaped and made their way back home (La Harpe, 1971:176-182). Two months later La Harpe abandoned his project on Galveston Bay leaving the Indian trade in eastern Texas a monopoly of St. Denis at Natchitoches (Bienville, 1721 & 1722).

One result of La Harpe's voyage was maps. One is the "Carte de la Coste de la Louisiane" showing the Baye de St. Bernard and another is the "Plan due Port decourvert dans le Golfe du Mexique le 21. d'Aoust 1721...," the earliest known map of Galveston Bay. One cartographic expert considers the latter more accurate than the Spanish maps published after 1799 (Taliaferro, 1988:70-71).

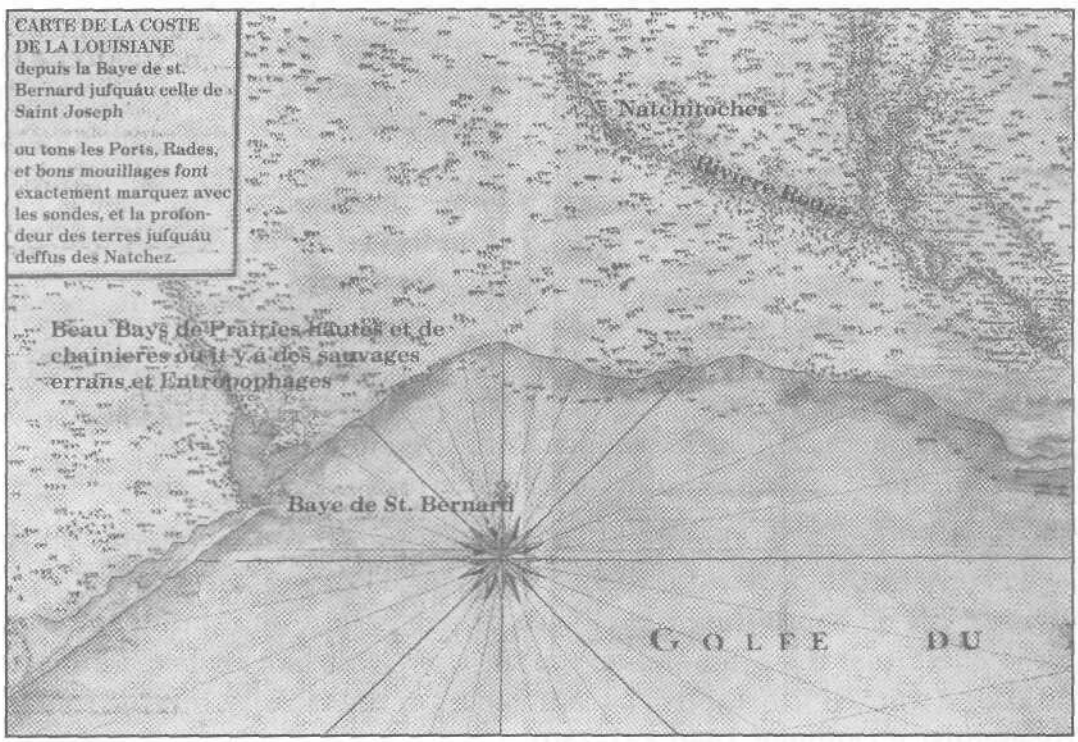

Illustration 4a.~Carte de la Coste de la Louisiana. (Source: Folmer, 1940.)

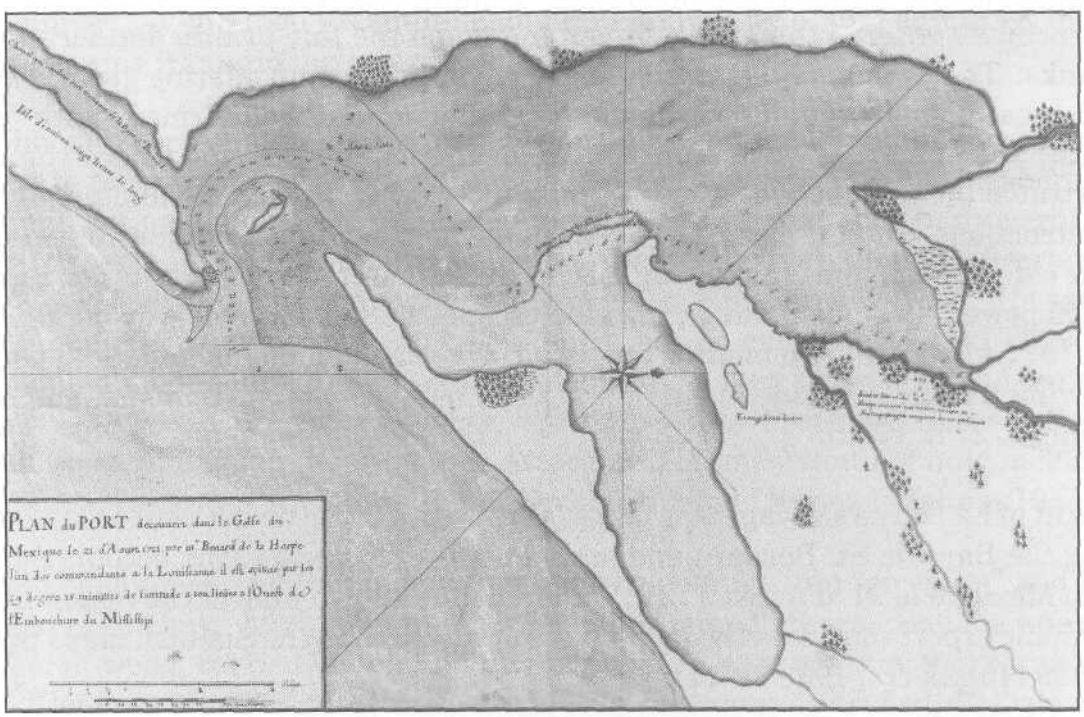

Illustration 4b.-Plan du Port decouvert dans le Golfe du Mexique le 21. d'Aoust 1721 par mr. Benard de la Harpe (1725). (Source: Rosenberg Library, Galveston Texas)

Even though the French relinquished the idea of a post on Galveston Bay, individual French traders began entering the bay by 1730 to trade with the Orcoquiza villages on the lower Trinity and San Jacinto rivers. Like La Harpe, they anchored their schooners in the bay and ascended the rivers by canoe or pirogue. A pirogue can be a simple flat canoe pointed on both ends or a larger shallow-draft sailing canoe capable of being rowed. Thus by the 1730s, the bay was changing from a focus for food to being a means of transportation-at least for French traders.

In 1746, responding to rumored French trading activity on the Trinity River, Capt. Joaquin de Orobio Bazterra of La Bahia [Goliad], was ordered to investigate immediately. His efforts demonstrated that Spain still had no knowledge of the coastal area east of Matagorda Bay. In October he started down the Guadalupe River intending to march along the coast, but high water and rough country convinced him he needed to build canoes. That project was abandoned in December when he and twenty-one soldiers started up the old Spanish road to the crossing on the Trinity River. There they planned to follow the river to its mouth. But upon reaching the Trinity in January, Orobio Bazterra discovered that local Indians knew nothing about a road leading south so the party continued to Nacogdoches. The priest knew about a Bidais trail that led south through what is now the Big Thicket. Recently, he said, fifteen shipwrecked Frenchmen had come up the trail and passed the mission enroute to Louisiana. Unsure of what to do, Orobio Bazterra marched another fifty miles eastward to Los Adaes to consult with the governor of Texas. In February the captain returned to Nacogdoches, found a guide, and started south over the Bidais trail. He was the first Spaniard the Bidais had seen; the same situation occurred at two Orcoquiza villages near Spring Creek in northern Harris County. These Indians told him that the French had been visiting the area for six years and had recently named a site on the lower San Jacinto River as an annual trading post for bear, deer, and buffalo skins. Orobio Bazterra then headed home traveling northwest through the wilderness until he struck the *camino real* leading to La Bahia. He reached home in April (Bolton, 1970:328-332).

Spaniards seldom were traders like the French, but in 1751, the governor at Los Adaes unofficially became the head trader to serve southeastern Texas. He quietly bought goods in Natchitoches or New Orleans from his French enemies and used his troops to deliver the merchandise to the Indian villages on the San Jacinto and Trinity rivers. His lucrative contraband trade was threatened in 1754 when Joseph Blancpain, a French trader with the Attacapas in Louisiana, arrived by boat in Galveston Bay. With two partners, Blancpain built a trading post on the south shore of what is now Lake Miller which drained into the Trinity River just above the Interstate Highway 10 bridge in Chambers County. This was the site of an ancient Indian village. Blancpain put up warehouses and even built a wharf. As soon as the Spanish governor learned about the French trader, he sent a squad to arrest the intruders. Blancpain was taken to Mexico City where the xenophobic Spaniards decided he was an agent sent to extend French

rule over southeastern Texas. The Frenchman died before he could be sent to Spain for further interrogation (Bolton, 1970:336-339).

The Spanish response was typical: a mission and presidio were established at El Orcoquisac in 1756. Personnel and supplies were drawn from both northeastern Texas and from the San Antonio area-all traveling over the *camino real* and down through the Big Thicket. No Spaniard had yet explored Galveston Bay! The mission Nuestra Senora de la Luz attracted a few Indians who were willing to receive food and clothing but who refused to live inside the compound. They remained in their nearby villages sometimes helping the priests with crops and building projects. A few were baptized. The priests and soldiers complained about the bad water, the insects, and the lack of supplies reaching the remote outpost. An inspection in 1767 reported the presence of thirty-one cavalrymen and two priests, but no converts. The authorities closed the complex in 1771 and sent the missionaries and soldiers to San Antonio in a move to reduce expenses (Bolton, 1970:342-358; 372-374).

The Spanish outposts in eastern Texas were no longer needed because France had lost Louisiana in 1763 at the close of the Seven Years War (French and Indian War). Spain received French land west of the Mississippi River plus New Orleans while the British claimed the eastern bank. The capital of Texas was moved to San Antonio, but Spain was not eager to allow strangers to settle in eastern Texas. The former French traders, now Spanish citizens, continued to trade with the Texas Indians and a great deal of smuggling took place through Nacogdoches, Natchitoches, and Natchez—especially livestock from south Texas ranches driven eastward. Although both Texas and Louisiana were Spanish, Louisiana retained its French culture and was governed from Havana while Texas was administered from Mexico City. Each maintained its own protective tariffs.

Finally in 1783, Bernardo de Galvez, the Spanish governor of Louisiana, ordered a survey made of the entire Gulf coast from Florida to Tampico. He chose Jose Antonio Evia, a graduate of the Royal Naval School and long-time naval officer in the Gulf, to explore and map the rivers, inlets, and bays. By the time Evia sailed in 1785, Galvez had been named Viceroy of Mexico and the intrepid captain wisely named the deep bay on the Texas coast and its island for his patron. His charts and diaries were used by the Hydrographic Service in Madrid for a map published in 1799 as "Carta Esferica...las costas del Seno Mexico...(Branda, 1976:287). Galveston Bay is labeled for the first time. A copy of this map and a slightly edited 1807 version are at the Rosenberg Library, Galveston.

By the end of the century, citizens of the new United States were pushing westward and in 1803 acquired Spanish Louisiana which had been reclaimed by the French. The aggressive Anglo American expansionists would soon be exploring Galveston Bay.

Illustration 5.–Carta Particular de las Costas Setentrionales del Seno Mexicano (1807).
(Source: Rosenberg Library, Galveston Texas)